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QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO COLONIAL AND OTHER DEPENDENT COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES

Written statement submitted by the International Federation of Action of Christians for the Abolition of Torture, a non-governmental organization on the Roster

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement, which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV).

[15 January 1994]

Violations of article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

1. The International Federation of Action of Christians for the Abolition of Torture (IFACAT) has set itself the task of helping to promote full respect for article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 10 December 1948, including the abolition of capital punishment. Through its 19 affiliated associations and eight associations in the process of affiliation, IFACAT acted, between September 1992 and September 1993, specifically on behalf of 4,355 victims of violations of article 5 in 113 countries throughout the world. It has also acted on numerous occasions on behalf of members of population groups who have not been individually identified, but who have been tortured, ill-treated or threatened. IFACAT has noted an increase in reprehensible actions taken against such groups, as it told the Commission last year.

2. These massive and collective violations of human dignity are aggravated by the political confusion reigning in some countries, by the disappearance of any identifiable central political authority and by the wilful exacerbation of ethnic, religious or racial rivalries. The political authorities of many countries bear direct responsibility for these violent developments.

3. The international community has an obligation to react whenever and wherever violations of article 5 are reported to it. IFACAT has, however, decided this year to draw the Commission's attention to the situation in five countries. It has taken this decision in connection with cases already brought before the Commission in the hope that the Commission will take fresh and even more forceful decisions to urge the authorities in the countries concerned to respect their commitments.

4. The international community needs to make it clear to Governments which are unwilling to respect the human rights instruments they have signed that it is not discouraged and that it is once again making its requirements known. The Commission on Human Rights should clearly indicate to countries which refuse to cooperate that it is not forgetting them and that it will not be silenced by the lack of willingness of certain States.

Myanmar

5. Despite such promising signs as the release of some 2,000 political prisoners and regular appeals to insurgent minorities for cease-fire agreements, the military authorities in power maintain a climate of fear, intimidation and widespread violations of human rights. There have been many cases of political imprisonment and convictions following unfair trials, which include that of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, who will have spent five years in prison in July 1994. Civilians - men, women and children, particularly members of ethnic minorities - are routinely arrested by the military, subjected to torture, rape or ill-treatment and put to work as porters in the army until they die of exhaustion or are executed.

6. IFACAT strongly urges the Commission to continue to pay special attention to this situation and to press the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) insistently to implement the recommendations contained in resolution 1993/73.

Haiti

7. Several months after the agreed dates for the implementation of the Governor's Island Agreement, signed on 3 July 1993, none of the agreed provisions has yet been implemented and the elected president has not returned. The observers sent by the United Nations and the Organization of American States have been withdrawn. There is no protection for the population against arbitrary action. There has been no decline in political violence and human rights violations, in all their well-known forms. Contacts with human rights supporters in the country make it clear that hopes for a political solution lie in ruins. IFACAT urges the Commission to focus closer attention than ever on the situation in Haiti.

Zaire

8. The situation in Zaire is more serious than at any time since independence. Hundreds of civilians have been the victims of extrajudicial executions committed by Government forces, which act with almost complete impunity. Dozens of prisoners have died of hunger or lack of care in appalling conditions of detention. The Commission should continue its consideration of the human rights situation in Zaire, particularly through thematic mechanisms (enforced disappearances, extrajudicial executions and torture).

Turkey

9. Over the last year, the member associations of IFACAT have seen a huge increase in their activities in cases of torture (over 650) and the denunciation of cases of enforced disappearances, extrajudicial executions, kidnapping and arbitrary detention.

IFACAT has been informed of large-scale enforced population displacements and the destruction of villages in so-called strategic areas, particularly in south-eastern Turkey.

The conclusions of an inquiry which was made public in the United Nations Committee against Torture show that torture is a systematic practice. IFACAT requests the Commission to take urgent decisions on this serious situation.

Sudan

10. The Special Rapporteur has concluded that human rights violations in Sudan are so serious that they require continued and increased monitoring. He requests unrestricted access to all areas which have given rise to concern and the provision of sufficient resources and means to carry out his mandate. All of the information received by the Special Rapporteur covers a very wide range of human rights violations.

IFACAT requests the Commission to provide the Special Rapporteur with all possible means to enable him to continue and intensify his mission.